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ABSTRACT

Schools, museums, and performing arts organizations each have roles to play in educating the public and enhancing awareness and understanding of the arts, science and culture. Moreover, these organizations have developed a symbiotic relationship, needing each other to help fulfill their mutual goals. School visits to museums used to enrich many aspects of the school curriculum are a primary source of revenue generation and program development for staff employed by museums. Students and teachers attend drama, music, and dance performances and artists are brought to classrooms to help students understand the creative process and promote appreciation for the value of artworks and artists. In this paper some fundamental differences among schools and cultural organizations are addressed, particularly in terms of ideologies and professional development of educators, and some commonalities in terms of intentions for educating the public are examined. By considering how schools and cultural organizations understand their roles as educators, educational researchers and cultural managers may find some innovative ways for thinking about how different institutions and organizations in society can collaborate and contribute to learning as a lifelong process. A list of 30 references is included. (DB)

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NURTURING MINDS, SPIRIT AND A LOVE OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Museums and Performing Arts Organizations as Educators: A Comparison

by

BARBARA J. SOREN

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When an adult chooses to spend a Sunday afternoon looking at objects in a museum or a matinée of a current dance production in a theatre the type of educational experience is likely to be quite different than when a young person has to spend a Monday afternoon in a school classroom. The adults visiting a museum or attending a dance production are looking at different media of expression in environments quite unlike the classroom setting. The objects in the museum tend to be static, in a fixed space, and are generally inanimate. The dancers on the stage of the theatre are active, dynamic, and make continual changes in time and space and relationships. The visitor to the museum moves freely and voluntarily from object to object. Often discourse is discouraged as one looks and reads labels in the quiet, contemplative museum environments, but on tours and in more interactive exhibit areas there may be opportunities to manipulate components of displays and share experiences with museum educators and accompanying family or friends. The dance is observed from a fixed position in a seat in a darkened theatre or performance area. Program notes can only be referred to before or after the work being watched. No other interpretive aid tends to be provided for the viewer but there is the possibility for some sharing of impressions and information with others during intermissions. In each experience one appreciates a learning environment less formal than a classroom and pays attention to details without the fear of being tested or examined on what may be learned that day.

In spite of these differences, schools, museums and performing arts organizations each have roles to play in educating the public and enhancing awareness and understanding of arts, science and culture. Moreover, these organizations have developed a symbiotic relationship, needing each other to help fulfil missions and mandates, aims and objectives. School visits to museums, used to enrich many aspects of the school curriculum, are a primary source of revenue generation and program development for staff employed by museums. Students and teachers also attend drama, music and dance performances and artists are brought into classrooms to help

students understand the creative process and promote appreciation for the value of artworks and artists. In this paper I address some fundamental differences between schools and cultural organizations, particularly in terms of ideologies and professional development of educators, and examine some commonalities in terms of intentions for educating the public. By considering how schools and cultural organizations understand their role as educators, educational researchers and cultural managers may find some innovative ways for thinking about how different institutions and organizations in society can collaborate and contribute to learning as a lifelong process.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The intimate relationship between cultural organizations and education of the public has roots far back in history and over the years cultural organizations have had a variety of educational roles. Osborne (1985:41) has traced the origins of this relationship to antiquity when the *mouseion* was an institution devoted to the encouragement of literature and learning. It was a centre for scholars and poets, philosophers and scientists, mathematicians and astronomers. Noted scholars and scientists were supported to work in these institutions by public endowment. During the Italian Renaissance and seventeenth century great paintings, music and the pursuit of the literature were thought to have the effect of softening manners and bringing about a general improvement in morals (Haskell, 1985:19). By the nineteenth century, museums were in the self-education, not the mass-instruction, business (Hudson, 1975). For instance, Sir John Soane in his museum at Lincoln's Inn Fields hoped to condition people's emotions without determining which facts they might absorb, and in what order or pattern. In 1927, Kenyon stated his belief that the public museum's educational purpose was to plan and arrange so that casual visitors could realize their interest, feel a challenge to their curiosity and a means of gratifying their curiosity, and leave with an awakened mind and an enlarged experience, not merely a headache!

While the school has become the formal educational institution responsible for involuntary education, museums (and libraries) have served as non-formal educational institutions in society. The education function in museums, generally, seems to have moved increasingly towards communication and entertainment in an attempt to build new audiences and in competition for funding with other institutions providing continuing education and recreation. This combined

education and entertainment function, or *edutainment*, has to do with an expectation that visitors bring to their leisure time experiencing based upon their encounters with theme parks such as EPCOT Center or Disney/MGM Studios in Orlando, Florida, and modern media.[1]

The performing arts, too, have a long tradition, within pre-literate and literate societies, of educating the public. Dance, for instance, has been taught for use in celebrations and entertainments and rituals, for aesthetic and intellectual gratification, for strengthening of the body and cultivation of the mind, for grace and etiquette (Kraus, 1969:119-121). The primary role of teaching the public about dance technique has been the responsibility of private studios. Dance companies have increasingly been attempting to educate the public and develop audience for dance and dance series are building dance talks into their activities. British dance companies have clearly articulated their educational policy (Hoyle, 1988). For instance, The Royal Ballet attempts to enrich the experience and understanding of dance as art, to kindle an enthusiasm for ballet in as wide a range of people as possible and to give insight into the repertoire and working methods of the Companies, by facilitating wider access to their human and material resources.

What terminology is currently used to describe how cultural organizations serve the public? The executive director of the American Association of Museums (AAM), Edward H. Able Jr., claims that the museum's mission, in the most basic sense, is to *nurture the minds and the spirit* of the American people (1991). Hardy describes the intentions of the City Center Theatre's Young People's Dance Series in New York City as encouraging tomorrow's subscribers *while nurturing a love of dance* (1991). Nurturing, in the context of teaching or educating, connotes preparing, habituating, familiarizing one with subject matter. The process of nurturing

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[1] The notion of *edutainment* is examined in Curriculum-Making and the Museum Mosaic (1990) in which I compared the experiences planned for visitors at The Gibson House living history site, an installation of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Hall of Technology at the Ontario Science Centre. Joel Weiss, et al, also used the term to describe experiences planned for visitors to the Bat Cave at the Royal Ontario Museum (1988). Theme parks and the value of education and entertainment have been discussed by, for instance, George MacDonald, Director of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (for example, 1986 & 1988), Neil Postman, a professor of communications at New York University, Washington Square (1990), and Margaret King, former director of development at Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum and a specialist in popular culture (1990).

helps to promote an individual's development by providing some sort of nourishment, support or encouragement. Educating seems to go beyond nurturing to helping one become informed or enlightened or gain insight into the subject matter. Through the process of educating, one imparts or acquires general knowledge and develops powers of reasoning and judgment.[2]

During the last decade of this century, are cultural organizations moving into the role of nurturer in their attempt to promote public awareness of their subject matter? Are they primarily attempting to support and encourage some comfort and familiarization with the subject matter presented? Museums traditionally, and arts organizations more recently, have been interested in helping those who choose to attend to become informed and gain knowledge by enlightening the public about subject matter presented. Perhaps cultural organizations serve the public by nurturing the less informed in order to encourage attendance, while educating the converted to become better informed. Whose job should this nurturing or education be? Nurturing the public seems to be something that school-based educators also value. In *Toward Civilization* published by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the generalist elementary school teacher is described as providing "the kind of individual nurturing that comes from prolonged experience with one teacher" (1988:110). How does nurturing an individual relate to nurturing one's mind and spirit or nurturing a love of the arts? The following discussion is an attempt to better understand the educational intentions of schools and cultural organizations and to compare ways in which each provides opportunities for lifelong learning about arts, science and culture.

FUNDAMENTAL IDEOLOGIES

Schooling is mandatory and involuntary for all young people in our society. Following the Industrial Revolution, the notion of universal state-supported education gained acceptance and the state school was given the authority to serve the need to educate the public. Consequently, in schools the primary task is educating those who attend, and institutes and certification routes have evolved to develop teachers who will best be able to accomplish this task. For example,

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[2] Dictionaries tend to define *nurturing* in biological terms, whereas *education* is defined in pedagogical terms. As examples, the meanings cited are taken from the New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus (1991) and The Random House College Dictionary, Revised Edition (1980).

Egerton Ryerson served as superintendent of education for Canada West from 1844 to 1876.[3] Ryerson's belief that universal and compulsory education was essential for individual improvement and society's progress culminated in the Ontario School Act of 1871 and the development of the primary and secondary school system in Ontario.

A century later, how do school-based educators describe this mandatory public education role? In the area of arts education, one group which has clearly articulated what this role should be is the National Endowment for the Arts working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education. The NEA has outlined their understanding of what arts education, as a part of basic education in the schools, should embrace today. First there must be consensus on minimum knowledge, understanding, skills, concepts, behaviours and attitudes expected in an arts discipline followed by the development of comprehensive, basic and sequentially sequenced curricula in the various arts disciplines. Included in the curricula should be study of the great works of art from all times and cultures, those that probe the nature of humans and reveal us to ourselves. Such consensus helps to determine what teachers should teach and students should learn and therefore what skills teachers should have, what resources are needed to support instruction and what standards should be set to evaluate achievement. This kind of understanding is needed so that boards of education can be accountable for policy and support, administrators accountable for program implementation, teachers accountable for instruction, and students accountable for learning (1988:71).

In contrast, attendance at cultural organizations is voluntary; one chooses to attend when, where, how and with whom one pleases. These organizations are intended to help individuals in society become aware of, and develop interest in, critical understanding of and sensitivity to the

[3] Ryerson also recognized the importance of school/museum partnerships. He began a museum at the Toronto Normal School and influenced David Boyle who became curator-archaeologist of the Canadian Institute Museum (1884-96) and the Ontario Provincial Museum (1886-1911) which was established as the Royal Ontario Museum by an Act of the Ontario legislature in 1912 (Semple, 1985).

diversity of human cultural achievements and past human behaviour.[4] The notion of awareness and understanding of cultural products is thought to relate to four connected but distinct areas (Rossignol & White, 1991:109). First, on a personal level, one's experience, beliefs, values and practices contribute to a total knowledge. E.D. Hirsch Jr. (1987) has termed this *cultural literacy* or a certain amount of "background information" which is required before anyone can even minimally participate in communication and transactions that take place within a culture. Second, at a community level, one can also come to know about one's cultural community or tradition and the distinctive characteristics and institutions of that tradition. Third, on the institutional level, cultural organizations can help an individual to become familiar with and knowledgeable about the elements of her/his cultural tradition and other cultural traditions. Fourth, on an artistic and scientific level, one can gain knowledge and expertise about the individual arts[5] and sciences, and develop literacy in these areas. In Hirsch's terms, such literacy may have to do with acquiring enough background information to be able to participate in communication and transactions related to the arts and sciences.[6] The point here is that awareness, familiarity, understanding and expertise can all be achieved in experiences related to cultural organizations. However, attendance is voluntary and attention to what is presented is selective. Consequently, there is no accountability for the public's learning; there is accountability for funding and publicity and numbers of individuals who attend (Borun, 1989).

Cultural organizations, also, have specific commitments to the public they serve. For

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[4] This statement was made to the House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-12 in Proceedings related to an Act respecting museums (Canada, 1989:4:24-25).

[5] The arts are considered part of the cultural sector which encompasses all activities connected with the creation and the public or semi-public presentation of literature, drama, music and opera, dance, the visual arts, heritage (including museums, galleries and archives) and most aspects of film, video, and mixed media (Rossignol & White, p. 111).

[6] In a postscript to The Journal of Aesthetic Education's special issue on cultural literacy and arts education (1990, **24**(1), 169), culturally literate persons are thought to be those "whose education has enabled them to make their way through life with competence and assurance, comprehending and participating in society's major forms of communication". Arts literate persons "would be individuals who, having been the beneficiaries of well-designed and executed programs in arts education, would move about the art(s) world(s) with intelligence, sensitivity and discernment".

instance, community museums in Ontario have a fundamental commitment to the collection, preservation and presentation of material culture, and to the recognition of diverse traditions and backgrounds (Heritage Branch, 1981:5). Collections and traditions are important because museum collections represent the whole diversity of the world's cultural, scientific and natural heritage and society's cumulative effort to save ourselves, our history, our natural surroundings, our technological and creative endeavours (Bloom, et al, 1984:35). Performing arts organizations have a commitment to presenting performances and productions to the public so as to advance cultural activities and build on outstanding technical and interpretive strengths. They attempt to create and execute a repertoire of classical and/or innovative contemporary works.[7] Further, the agencies which fund and support performing arts organizations help to ensure that the creators of society's works of arts, the professional artists who achieve excellence, are especially valued and supported and receive the same social and financial reward as other professionals in society (Ontario Arts Council, 1983:19;47).

In summary, then, museums exhibit and communicate ideas related to society's material culture, heritage and scientific phenomena; visual and performing arts organizations provide opportunities for artists in our society to present the works of art that they have created and produced. Cultural organizations also are accountable to the public who helps to fund them, but not for what is taught and learned. Cultural organizations are responsible for helping to make the creative ideas in our society accessible to the public by exhibiting and presenting cultural products. In these organizations collecting, preserving, exhibiting, presenting, producing and touring are paramount. Educating the public is considered important but is far from top priority. People developing and managing educational programs and activities tend to be at the bottom end of the status hierarchy within cultural organizations (for example, as discussed by Eisner and Dobbs, 1986).

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[7] Statement from the National Ballet Company, Revised Aims and Objectives (1988).

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Although driven by different ideologies, curricula in schools and education programs and activities for the general public in museums and performing arts organizations have similar intentions for their clients or consumers. They are attempting to educate the public so that individuals will value artistic creation, scientific innovation and/or cultural consumption as a lifelong endeavour. The public may also come to understand how the arts and sciences contribute to national culture and national consciousness (Rossignol & White, p. 201). Cultural organizations are increasingly attempting to articulate how such goals can be accomplished.

Museums communicate to their visitors the essence of ideas, impart knowledge, encourage curiosity and promote aesthetic sensibility by presenting objects and ideas in an informative and stimulating way (Bloom, et al, p. 55). In Ontario, new mission statements are being articulated by museums and performing arts organizations which seem to go beyond nurturing, clarifying intentions to motivate learning and provide individuals with lifelong understanding of the arts and sciences. When the Ontario Science Centre (OSC) was created in 1965, the educational mandate of the museum was "to stimulate the interest of the public in matters depicted by the Centre". In 1989, senior management decided to rearticulate their mission statement so that it more clearly represented educational intentions towards promoting literacy in science and technology. Entering the 1990s an attempt is being made:

> *to open minds to science. Through participatory exhibits, public programs and reaching out to Ontario's community the Ontario Science Centre will engage the interest of people of all ages. We will strive to create environments which excite curiosity, inspire insights and motivate learning in science and technology.* (OSC Annual Report, 1989/90:1)

Similarly, when the National Ballet Company (NBC) was created in 1951, one of the stated intentions was "to promote interest in the art of ballet". The company has been fighting for an urgently needed new home and performing venue in Toronto and has been attempting to justify the value of the organization to the public. Revised Aims and Objectives in 1988 stated that the NBC intended:

> *to increase the number of individuals who will regularly attend the Company's performances and participate in its development and educational activities, for example, with continuing educational outreach programmes about dance as part of public*

programmes and within and in collaboration with educational institutions.

To fulfil these aims the Manager of Educational Services and Archivist became responsible for helping the public to develop an appreciation of the many facets of ballet and providing students with a life-long understanding of this unique and multi-faceted art form.

Although reasons for existing may be quite different, then, schools and cultural organizations want and need to educate the public at all stages of lifelong learning. At the very least, individuals can come to feel some measure of comfort with arts, science and culture which may have to do with the notion of nurturing minds and spirit with a love of the arts and fascination with the sciences. Beyond comfort those who regularly and continuously attend museums and arts performances are likely to develop literacy in these fields, improving their ability to communicate about, in and/or through the arts and sciences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Across schools and cultural organizations professionals are needed who can provide focused leadership to the community involved and working in arts and science disciplines. This leadership is needed at all ages, stages and situations, from one's first encounters with arts, science and culture, throughout and beyond schooling. What are some of the implications, then, for the training and development of such professionals?

In school-based education it is understood that the quality and success of arts education, as an example of one area to be taught, ultimately rests with those who teach the arts. Basic arts education in schools is to provide a sense of the arts in civilization, creativity in the artistic process, vocabularies of artistic communication, and critical elements necessary to making informed choices about the products of the arts (NEA, p. 89). It is the teachers who are responsible for fostering students' creativity and conveying to students a sense of civilization. Consequently, it is recommended that teachers be given both opportunities to develop their abilities and keep up with new findings in the teaching profession and the subjects they teach, as well as administrative support and resources to succeed (NEA, p. 101). Such development is

government sponsored and regulated. In Ontario, innovations in teacher education are being recommended which outline how teachers can be trained so that "the science and technology of teaching is continually developing and for whom the job is fundamentally an art which they study, reflect on, and refine throughout their careers" (Fullan & Connelly, 1987:50). In addition it is recommended that school-based teacher development should be enriched with support systems, some of which take teachers out of the classroom for more intensive training in preferred classroom practices (Thiessen, et al, 1991:50). Across-organization partnerships are discussed in which different institutions can work together to advance self-interests and solve common problems (p. 59). Of course, one of these partners should be cultural organizations.

In cultural organizations, although leadership which focuses on educating the public is mandated, training related to public education strategies, methodologies and curriculum development is neither government sponsored nor regulated. Those who are educating the public do not need certification to teach the public and post-secondary courses related to education of the public tend to be a component of other programs, such as museum studies and arts administration programs. Certificate programs for museum professionals have some development opportunities related to educating the public. Museums such as historic sites have on-site and cross-site training in which museum workers can learn about historical interpretation, teaching and interpretation techniques, local history and life style skills (such as, agricultural work, costume design, spinning and weaving). Increasingly museum educators are being funded to attend and present at events such as conferences, symposia and workshops.[8]

The performing arts organizations in Ontario have virtually no training in place for administrators of education programs and few opportunities for professional development in public education. Since educating the public in performing arts organizations tends to be seen as a marketing and/or public relations tool, coordinators of educational programs tend to be housed

[8] Interest in and support of museum education amongst museum professionals is steadily increasing. Ten proposals from the EdCom Committee of the American Association of Museums were accepted for the 1992 annual conference, the highest acceptance rate of any of the 11 standing professional committees (Black, 1992).

in marketing, public relations and communications departments. In a document in the National Ballet Company of Canada's archives, the question was asked in 1951: "What is the Company doing to improve technical skills of non-dancing staff?". Interchanges with other ballet companies or theatrical groups and training programs or workshops were suggested as possibilities for staff training. In 1991, the Manager of Education Services and Archivist reported that there is still no pre-service or in-service training for her position. Although the importance of audience development and public education in the arts is recognized, training of the arts professional who is developing educational activities and programs for schools and the general public continues to be neglected.

What seems to be needed are more deliberately designed arrangements among the different institutions in our communities which employ professionals who are helping the public learn about arts, science and culture. Schools and cultural organizations need to work together to advance the self-interests of each and discuss both successes and common problems. Schools, museums and performing arts organizations are all attempting to promote public interest so that individuals in our society will want to experience and learn more about arts and science. Why not work together not only to nurture individuals, minds and spirit, and a love for the arts and sciences, but also to help the public develop expertise and understanding? Perhaps such knowledge may contribute to improved arts, science and cultural literacy and encourage more individuals to attend museums and arts performances. Further, such knowledge may empower cultural consumers to be proactive and advocate and lobby in support of the important roles that the artist and scientist play in our society. It seems that across cultural organizations there is not enough attention paid to the rapidly developing research and literature related to teacher development by school-based educational researchers attempting to improve mandatory education in our society. Alternatively, schools pay little attention to the innovative and creative approaches to teaching and learning unique to our diverse cultural organizations in which professionals experiment with the most effective ways to help the public come to know about their specific subject matter. Professional development of those working towards educating the public needs some consistency so that public educators can develop common strategies for providing educative, enriching, inspiring, illuminating experiences as individuals experience arts, science

and culture throughout their lives.[9] In a time when schools and cultural organizations are facing economic restraints, partnerships and collaboratives are essential; sharing of research into theory and practice is as important as sharing of resources and funding. Through joint efforts the arts and sciences, within and beyond schooling, may continue to thrive and flourish and those who attend museums and arts performances may be provided with personally meaningful experiences through which they can open their minds and continually grow.

NOTE

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable insights of Robert Williams from the Department of Political Science at University of Waterloo, my co-investigator for an inquiry into Ontario cultural organizations as educators of the public (Soren & Williams, 1991), and Jill Humphries our research assistant.

[9] For a discussion and case studies of illuminating and aversive experiences related to school children during visits to museums, see Taylor's Educating for art -- Critical responses and development (1986).

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